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ABSTRACT

A brief overview of the status of state programs designed to assess teacher competency is provided. Tests commonly used by states include tests of persons who apply to educational programs (admissions tests) and tests for graduates of teacher education programs (certification tests). Admissions tests are used by 24 states, while certification tests are used by 36 states. Most states rely on nationally developed tests, rather than designing tests of their own. Admissions tests help states screen people before they enroll in teacher education programs. Certification tests assess basic skills, professional skills, and subject knowledge. Tabulated data arranged by state (all 50 states, excluding the District of Columbia) on the current status of admissions and certification testing are included. (TJH)

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State Testing of Teachers: A Summary of Current Practices

by Thomas E. Eissenberg and Lawrence M. Rudner

Assessing teachers' competency has been an issue of increasing concern in the educational community throughout the last decade. In 1983, *A Nation At Risk* recommended that "Persons preparing to teach. . . demonstrate competence in an academic discipline." And in 1988, *American Education: Making it Work* recommends testing "current teachers as well as new teachers for competency."

In response to this concern, the number of states that now requires at least one of the two most common forms of teacher testing has grown from only 10 states before 1980 to 46 in 1988.

Which Tests Do States Commonly Use?

States commonly use two types of tests to assess prospective teachers:

- **Admissions tests:** for people who apply to teacher education programs
- **Certification tests:** for graduates of teacher education programs before they begin teaching

Considering admissions tests and certification tests together, only four states (Alaska, Iowa, South Dakota, and Vermont) do not currently assess or plan to assess their teachers. Also, most states rely on nationally developed tests rather than designing tests of their own.

How Many States Use These Tests?

Admissions Tests: Admissions tests help states to screen people before they enroll in teacher education programs. Twenty-four states have now begun admissions testing. Wisconsin is expected to use admissions tests next year and Ohio intends to do so, with tests determined by each teacher education program, in 1991.

Though the tendency is for states to rely on existing assessment tests, the instruments are varied. Of the 24 states that now use admissions standards:

17 use existing tests
4 allow colleges of education to choose tests
3 use only tests that are custom designed

Certification Tests: Certification tests are the most common form of teacher assessment. Thirty-six states now use them. Massachusetts intends to use them in 1989, and Ohio and Michigan both plan to have programs by 1991.

As with admissions tests, states commonly choose existing certification tests rather than designing their own. Of the 36 states that now use certification tests:

26 use existing tests
8 use tests that are custom designed
2 use a combination of existing tests and tests that are custom designed

Certification tests assess three areas of knowledge:

- **Basic skills:** teachers' competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Of the 35 states that identified the skills they test or intend to test, 27 said they test basic skills.
- **Professional skills:** teachers' ability to teach. At least 23 of the states reported that they test professional skills.
- **Subject knowledge:** teachers' expertise in their areas of specialization. Twenty-four of the states said they test subject knowledge.

See the table on the next page for the current status of admissions and certification tests by state. To prepare this digest, ERIC updated a version of the tables found in *What's Happening in Teacher Testing* (1987).

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State	Data Revised	Admission Tests: Test[1]	Pass[2] Rate	Passing[3] Scores	Certification Tests: Test	Pass Rate	Passing Scores	Coverage: basic	prof	subj
Alabama	1987	Custom	80%		Custom	85%			Yes	Yes
Alaska	1987	–			–					
Arizona	1987	PPST	79 (1986)	173,172,174	Custom	78 (1985)		Yes	Yes	
Arkansas	1987	–			NTE				Yes	Yes
California	1987	CBEST	77 (1986)		CBEST	74 (1986)		Yes		
Colorado	1988	CAT	58 (1986)	75%ile	–					Yes
Connecticut	1987	Custom	55 (1986)		NTE					
Delaware	1987				PPST	69 (1983-6)	175,175,172	Yes		
Florida	1988	SAT, ACT		40%ile	Custom	82 (1980-7)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	1987	–			Custom	78 (1981-6)				Yes
Hawaii	1987	–			NTE	73 (1986)	647,651,648	Yes	Yes	Yes
Idaho	1988	–			NTE		646,652,648	Yes	Yes	
Illinois	1987	–			Custom			Yes		Yes
Indiana	1988	–			NTE	88	647,653,646	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	1987	–			–					
Kansas	1988	–			PPST, NTE	94 (1986)	168,168,170	Yes	Yes	
Kentucky	1987	CTBS	63 (1985)	12.5 GES	NTE	93 (1985)	637,643,641	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	1988	NTE		–,645,644	NTE	90 (1986)	644,645,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	1987	–			NTE			Yes	Yes	
Maryland	1988	–			NTE			Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	1988	–			Planned for 1989					
Michigan	1988	–			Planned for 1991					
Minnesota	1988	–			PPST		173,169,172	Yes		Yes
Mississippi	1988	COMP		170	NTE		642,647,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	1987	SAT, ACT		800,18	–					
Montana	1988	–			NTE	92 (1986)	644,648,648	Yes	Yes	
Nebraska	1988	PPST		170,171,172	PPST		170,171,172			
Nevada	1987	PPST	95 (1985)	169,169,170	PPST			Yes		Yes
New Hampshire	1988	–			PPST	74 (1986)	173,174,175	Yes		
New Jersey	1988	–			NTE	83 (1986)	646,–,–	Yes		Yes
New Mexico	1987	Misc			NTE	88 (1985)	645,644,630	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	1988	–			NTE	79 (1986)	650,649,646	Yes	Yes	
North Carolina	1988	NTE		636,631,–	NTE	80 (1985)	–,–,644	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	1988	Misc			–					
Ohio	1987	Misc (Planned for 1991)			Planned for 1991					
Oklahoma	1987	Misc			Custom	81 (1982-5)				Yes
Oregon	1987	CBEST	77 (1986)		CBEST	80 (1986)		Yes		
Pennsylvania	1988	–			NTE, Custom			Yes	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	1988	–			NTE		649,657,648	Yes	Yes	
South Carolina	1988	Custom	81(1987)		NTE, Custom				Yes	Yes
South Dakota	1988	–			–					
Tennessee	1988	PPST		169,169,172	NTE		651,647,643	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	1987	PPST	71 (1987)	171,172,173	Custom	85 (1987)			Yes	Yes
Utah	1987	Misc			–					
Vermont	1988	–			–					
Virgina	1988	–			NTE		639,649,639	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	1987	Custom, SAT, ACT		80,700,16	–					
West Virginia	1988	PPST,	81 (1987)	172,172,171	Custom	88 (1987)	140			Yes
		COMP	95 (1987)	17						
Wisconsin	1987	PPST (Planned for 1989)			–					
Wyoming	1988	CAT		70%ile	–					
Totals		**26**	**Mean = 76**		**39**	**Mean = 83**		**27**	**23**	**24**

[1] ACT = the American College Testing Program. CAT = the California Achievement Test. COMP = the College Outcomes Measures Project. CTBS = the California Test of Basic Skills. SAT = the Scholastic Apitude Test. PPST = the Pre-Professional Skills Test. CBEST = the California Basic Education Skills Test.

[2] Passing rates may be cumulative, per administration, or for the most difficult subtest. Because of the different definitions, the mean value is only approximate.

[3] Passing scores for the PPST are for the reading, mathematics, and writing portions. Passing scores for the NTE are for the general knowledge, communication skills, and the professional knowledge portions.

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